

CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF PASSAIC COUNTY

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Mental Health Association in Passaic County as they celebrate their 30th Anniversary.

The beginnings of the Association go back to 1909, when Clifford Beers founded the Connecticut Society for Mental Hygiene, which would later become the National Mental Health Association.

In 1976, the Passaic County Community Companion Program was started by the Mental Health Association in New Jersey. This program was dedicated to helping individuals returning to their communities from state mental health hospitals. Volunteers were trained to work with individuals with mental illness one-on-one to ensure a successful return home.

Three years later, the plans to create a Mental Health Association Chapter in Passaic County began. By this time, the Passaic County Community Companion Program had helped 75 Passaic County residents.

At its annual meeting, the Mental Health Association in New Jersey voted full chapter status to the Mental Health Association in Passaic County. The Association offered the Community Companions and Family Companions programs, a self-esteem program for former patients and families of those with mental illness; a self-esteem program for grade-school children; the Mental Health Players; services to the homeless with mental illness, and a referral and information service. All of these services were and still are free of charge, thanks to over 100 Passaic County residents who volunteer their time to the MHAPC so they can help their neighbors in need.

As time went on, the Program's services continued to grow. In 1987, the Crossover Program began, helping young adults with mental illness. In 1997 the Peer Outreach Support Team (POST) was created to help consumers with mental illness provide support to those living in supportive housing. Most recently, the Arab-American Community Services Partnership was created in 2005, with a goal of forging cooperative efforts to address mental health services that are needed and to increase cultural understanding.

Through all of the Association's fantastic work, it is no surprise that in 2003 the Consumer Parent Support Network program received the honor of Best Practice Program for the Prevention of Neglect and Abuse for the Northern Region of New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Mental Health Association in Passaic County as they celebrate their 30th Anniversary.

THE ACCURACY IN MEDICARE PHYSICIAN PAYMENT ACT OF 2015

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to introduce the Accuracy in Medicare Physician Payment Act, legislation that will provide the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) with important tools that will strengthen primary care in this country.

For too long, Medicare has relied upon a flawed process to set payment rates for services on the physician fee schedule. Since 1991, CMS has outsourced the process of valuing physician services to the Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC), a secretive 31-member panel of doctors. The RUC's composition is shaped by the American Medical Association, and specialty societies are grossly overrepresented in its membership. As a private entity, the RUC is exempt from transparency laws, and the justifications for the committee's recommendations are opaque.

The RUC is extremely influential. From 1994 to 2010, CMS accepted approximately 90 percent of the committee's recommendations, and—although that rate has declined in recent years—the RUC continues to exert tremendous power over Medicare. This has far reaching implications for the entire American healthcare system, as Medicare's rates strongly influence the reimbursement rates of private insurers.

Meanwhile, our country faces a growing crisis in its primary care workforce. The Health Resources and Services Administration estimates that there will be a nationwide shortage of over 20,000 primary care doctors by 2020. Primary care providers—particularly those who practice in low-income and rural areas—are compensated at much lower rates than specialists. Recent medical graduates, who on average are saddled with about \$170,000 in educational debt, are steered away from lower-paying work in primary care toward lucrative specialties. This leaves millions of Americans without access to the care they need, threatening their health security and ultimately driving up healthcare costs for the entire country.

By distorting payment rates in favor of specialty services, the RUC has had a direct role in creating this crisis. Calls to reform its processes are growing. A recent report by the Government Accountability Office has called into question the accuracy of the RUC's recommendations due to weaknesses in its data collection methods and conflicts of interest by its members.

The Accuracy in Medicare Physician Payment Act will reform this flawed system. It will give CMS the tools it needs to ensure that payment rates serve the needs of the American people, not the needs of highly-compensated specialists. This legislation will establish an independent panel of experts within CMS that will identify distortions in payment rates and help Medicare develop evidenced-based updates to the fee schedule. Its processes will be highly transparent and it will be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires advisory bodies to hold open meetings and publish minutes. If necessary, CMS may still seek input from the

RUC, but all recommendations would be carefully scrutinized by the expert panel.

This legislation will ensure that the process of setting physician payment rates is subject to rigorous oversight, independent analysis by experts, and meaningful transparency. It will put an end to a flawed process that has contributed to a healthcare system that drives thousands of young doctors away from where they are needed most.

HONORING JOE DOWLING ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE GUTHRIE THEATER

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Mr. Joe Dowling, who is retiring in June from the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota after serving 20 distinguished years as Artistic Director. During Mr. Dowling's impressive tenure, he has directed more than 50 shows and reinforced the foundation for this world-class Minnesota cultural cornerstone.

Mr. Dowling joined the Guthrie as Artistic Director in 1995, bringing his ceaseless creativity and tireless dedication to the arts after leading other theater companies in his native Ireland. Among Mr. Dowling's many achievements is the development of training programs like the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training Program and A Guthrie Experience for Actors in Training. He also solidified a partnership with The Acting Company of New York and created the WorldStage Series, two programs that allow local talent to tour the U.S. and in turn welcomes internationally renowned theater programs to Minnesota. He has also shared his vision and talents on Broadway and at other prominent venues throughout the United States and Europe.

Perhaps Mr. Dowling's deepest legacy is the success of a \$125 million capital campaign and construction of a new theater home which was completed in 2006. Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, the theater is an architectural gem. At 285,000 square feet, the new Guthrie includes public gathering spaces and restaurants, and a 178-foot "endless bridge" that highlights a spectacular, soaring view of the mighty Mississippi River. The heart of the new Guthrie are three unique theaters offering special performance spaces and viewing perspectives. The Dowling Studio in particular is an intimate 200 person black box theater that has welcomed 33 local acting companies and stands as a testament to its namesake's commitment to developing and showcasing the Twin Cities arts community.

In a metropolitan area that boasts more theater seats per capita than anywhere else in the U.S. outside of New York, Minnesotans take great pride in our thriving, high quality performing arts community. Experiencing a performance at the Guthrie is a particular joy, and I attend shows there whenever I can. I am clearly not alone, because under Dowling's leadership, the Guthrie entertains, enriches and enlightens 400,000 patrons each year.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to honor Mr. Dowling and his many contributions to the rich cultural landscape in Minnesota as the